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ABSTRACT

This paper, (observing that socialization about, interactions with, and influences of the mass media are interrelated in important and understudied ways), briefly reviews the notion of "self" as defined through socially constructed matrices, and discusses evidence supporting the influence of social cognition as a factor in human behavioral outcomes. The implications of these ideas are examined in terms of media-related behaviors, particularly television usage. The paper proposes a broad reciprocal interaction scheme for elaborating the role of imputed attributions in the process of mass media influences. Following an introduction, the sections discuss self-perception and media use; the self in the context of television usage; social cognitive perceptions of television usage; research possibilities; and steps toward a reciprocal interaction scheme for understanding the processes of mass communication influences. (One figure is included, and 25 references are attached.) (SR)

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Thinking About Television: Toward a Social Cognition Theory of Mass Communication

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Introduction

Daughter: So what? You tell us about a few strong presuppositions and great stochastic systems. And from that we should go on to imagine how the world is? But --

Father: Oh, no. I also told you something about the limitations of imagining. So you should know that you cannot imagine the world as it is (And why stress that little word?).

And I told you something about the self-validating power of ideas: that the world partly becomes -- comes to be -- how it is imagined.

The excerpt above, taken from Gregory Bateson's "So What?" metalogue (1980, p. 227), suggests an already familiar proposition: We do not always see the world as it is, but often as we presume it to be. Accordingly, it is at times unclear whether the practice of social science reveals or obscures, whether research findings bring us to new wisdom or deeper ignorance in the face of "reality." While such problems (if they truly are problems) are probably best left to more professional philosophers, they do point to an axiomatic premise that, in some cases at least, is apparently ignored in the day-to-day practice of mass communication research.

What is generally referred to as *reality*, at least at the interpersonal level, is not a given or a fixed constant. Reality is, in fact, socially constructed (see, for example, Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Over sixty years ago, Walter Lippmann (1922) addressed the issue in this way:

> In all these instances, we must note particularly one common factor. It is the insertion between man and his environment of a pseudo-environment. To that pseudo-environment his behavior is a response. But because it *is* behavior, the consequences, if they are acts, operate not in the pseudo-environment where the behavior is stimulated, but in the real environment where the action eventuates .... For certainly, at the level of social life, what is called the adjustment of man to his environment takes place through the medium of fictions.

The result of this dynamic is, indeed, that the world, as Bateson argues, becomes as it is imagined. The observations of both Bateson and Lippmann raise important questions regarding mass communication theory and research. Traditional research concerning television usage continues, for example, with little regard for the "imaginings" of the research subjects. That is, such research has tended to ignore social cognition factors, such as how research subjects perceive of themselves and are perceived by others in relation to the activity under analysis (e.g., television usage).

The act of using television, in particular, has largely been examined without reference to the social cognitive attributes imputed to that activity. Yet our ability to truly understand what it <u>means</u> to "watch TV" requires more careful consideration of the socially-constructed attributions related to television usage. The importance of addressing the questions of how

research subjects perceive the act of television usage, and how they make sense of what others think about what it means to "watch TV," seems tremendously obvious. But, in this instance, mass communication researchers have apparently overlooked the obvious.

This oversight is significant for at least two important reasons. First, behaviors initiated in the face of television usage clearly involve some sort of self-reflection on the part of the users. That is, a television viewer is aware that he or she is a television viewer, in both a particular sense (e.g., an instance of viewing, bound temporally and spatially) and in a general sense (e.g., notions of overall viewing patterns throughout the course of a lifetime). This very awareness must, in turn, exert some influence on any consequences of interactions with the medium and its content. More simply stated, the various social and psychological perceptions of the actor must influence the act, the perceptions of the act must influence the actor.

Second, studies of the consequences (or, more commonly, "effects") of television usage might actually, and perhaps unwittingly, be studies of the consequences of these perceptual variables rather than accounts of "direct" media influences. Thus, documentation of social cognitive perceptions of television usage should reveal important and new variables for researchers. For what is significant here is that as researchers continue to painstakingly document a myriad of media-related behaviors, they gloss over a key aspect of those behaviors. Those who initiate media usage behaviors are also social cognizers, existing in an ecology of social cognizers, and are therefore not amenable to the analytic methods developed from the study of purely physiological and biological units of analysis.

What ultimately remains unaccounted for, then, is a primary influence on the activities under study -- the self-perceptions, as shaped by socially constructed attributions, of those who perform the documented behaviors and express the documented consequences of their behaviors. In short, mass communication researchers have not asked such basic questions as "What do you think of yourself as a television user?" (or as a Moonlighting, Star Trek, or All My Children viewer, and so on).

Furthermore, these logically-related, socially-based questions have not been carefully posed or answered. What do we, as a society, think of such television users in our midst? What status -- what *meaning* -- do we impute to them? And with what possible consequences? These questions cannot be answered in this paper, but we hope to pave the way for future research that might.

This paper briefly reviews the notion of "self" as defined through socially constructed matrices, and discusses evidence supporting the influence of social cognizing as a factor in human behavioral outcomes. The implications of these notions are examined in terms of media-related behaviors, particularly television usage. A broad reciprocal interaction scheme for elaborating the role of imputed attributions in the process of mass media influences is proposed. [1]

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[1]It is important to note, at this point, that the group "television user " is a unique social category as it includes nearly all American citizens. Likewise, it includes a substantial segment of the global human community. As such, it differs from more easily segmented categories such as "drug addict" or "poker player." Therefore, social cognitive attributes made toward the activity of television usage include, at some level, a self-attribution (which further underscores the urgency of examining this class of variables). Finally, it is still possible to refine the category "television user" into more discrete subgroups (soap opera fan, for example). In such cases, self-attribution is evident at the more general level.

Self-Perception and Media Use

Clearly, and as already noted, social perceptions of the *act* must influence the self-perceptions of the *actor*. Thus, for example, a society's normative assumptions about media use cannot be fully separated from the self-concepts maintained by each individual engaging in a particular media transaction.

In discussing the function and structure of the self-conception, Cushman and Craig (1976) note:

> We regard the self-conception as an organized set of rules which defines the relationships of the objects to the individual and which is capable of governing and directing human action. The self-conception, as an organized set of rules, provides the rationale for choice in the form of a valenced repertory of alternative plans of action. (p. 48)

Cushman and Craig stress that self-conceptions contribute to the formation of rules that guide human action in self-object relationships. Moreover, they conclude that:

> If the basic determinant of differential human behavior is an individual's rules regarding his relationship to objects then it is apparent that all the ways in which an individual can become aware of these relationships are the ways in which the self-conception is formed. (p. 49)

Applying this concept to media use, we might assert that socialization (in the acquisition of perceptions of the self as a particular "type" of media user) will reciprocally interact with how individuals use a medium. Particular usage patterns, and consequences of those patterns, might be

based upon one's acquired definitions of a medium and perceptions of one's relationship to that medium. As Brim (1968, p. 190) argues, "The individual, when looking or acting toward himself as an object, must initially do so from the point of view of some significant other person." "This viewpoint," Brim continues, "gradually becomes disassociated from any specific person so that the individual is no longer able to recall or identify the other person in the interpersonal relation." Thus, for example, information that parents provide to their children about television and its influences are likely to become part of children's perceptions of television not as their parents *say* it is, but as it *really* is. In effect, a child might be given a "self" in relation to television as defined by parents and other agents of socialization. His or her interactions with the medium, then, would be constrained and proscribed by such attributions.

The Self in the Context of Television Usage

As Hewitt (1984, pp. 8-9) aptly warns, though the concept of "self" is so centrally important to the study of all human behavior, " . . . it is also a difficult concept, for it lends itself rather easily to misinterpretation even while it is a powerful tool of analysis." Clarification of what is indeed an inherently obscure concept will not be undertaken here. Precision in definitional matters, after all, is not inherently a sign of scientific "power." In fact, it is possible that concepts such as "self" are only usefully reduced operationally when there is little concern for meaningful correspondence between definitions of the "thing" and the "thing itself." In this regard, it is important to underscore the basic theme of this paper, which is not

concerned *directly* with the self as a factor in behavioral outcomes. Rather, the admittedly narrow focus here is on potential relationships between *those aspects of a person's self that are related to media usage, as they might be socially defined,* and how such social definitions of "self-related aspects" function within the context of media-related behaviors.

Given this focus, little attention is given to the more-or-less psychological aspects of "personhood" or the process of "individuation," though these are clearly related analytical concerns. The obviously limited focus here is on the self as an object of social control. Hewitt's general observation of this aspect of self elaborates on this notion:

> . . . it is the possession of self that makes it possible for human beings to control their conduct. We can select the acts in which we will engage because we can imagine the social response they will earn. Yet, it is the possession of self that also makes human beings susceptible to social controls in a distinctively human fashion. For if we ask how it is that individuals come to have selves, the answer, we will find, lies in society. (1984, p. 91)

Then, if the question is one of how individuals come to have "viewing selves," or self-perceptions of themselves as television-users, the answers, too, might be found in society. Has society, in fact, defined the television user? And, if so, how?

Considering Social Cognitive Perceptions of Television Usage

Salomon (1981, p. 211) incisively states that " . . . communication is a consequence of attribution and attribution is a consequence of prior

communication." The processes of social cognition operate at the very center of our communicative experiences, and certainly television usage is one such experience. For the majority of members of society, television is at the heart of a communicative experience that occupies an appreciable amount of "communication time."

Furthermore, in his seminal essay on symbolic interaction, "Looking-Glass Self," Charles Horton Cooley (1972, p. 231) observes that "In a very large and interesting class of cases the social reference takes the form of a somewhat definite imagination of how one's self -- that is any idea he appropriates -- appears in a particular mind, and the kind of self-feeling one has is determined by the attitude toward this attributed to that other mind." Cooley goes on to argue that such a "self-idea" is comprised of three central elements:

1. The imagination of our appearance to the other person,
2. The imagination of his judgement of that appearance, and
3. Some sort of self-feeling (such as pride or mortification).

How might these elements be relevant to the analysis of television usage?

First, of course, it is important to ascertain how television viewers imagine they appear to others. For example, based on a study of dramatic serial fans, Whetmore and Kielwasser (1983, p. 115) report that many of their subjects expressed embarrassment when asked to discuss the soaps. These subjects apparently sensed the existence of a clear societal

disapproval of dramatic serial viewing (at least in relation to the social group "college students"). In effect, these subjects imagined that admitting to "too much" serial usage would cast them in an undesirable light. Ultimately, the self-feelings expressed by these college students were largely negative.

According to Whetmore and Kielwasser, such negative feelings could in fact lead to negative outcomes in the fashion of a "self-fulfilling prophecy." That is, serial users who feel badly about such behavior are relatively less likely, at the very least, to perceive their media usage as sufficiently important to merit explicit critical evaluation. Indeed, those who teach introductory mass communication courses are quite familiar with this sort of attitude -- the first hurdle many must leap involves getting students to truly realize that the content and process of mass communicating deserve at least as much critical attention as is given to other more traditional areas of academic inquiry.

What is especially significant here, though, is that such "negative" responses often stem from socially-imputed meanings in relation to media usage. Wolf and Kielwasser (1987) refer to this phenomenon as "the corruptive presumption," for there is both a presumption of corruptive influences and a consequent potential *creation* of those influences, so that the presumption itself can be viewed as "corruptive." Recently, Williams, Rice, and Dordick (1987) have offered a similar observation. The existence of stereotypes of communication technologies, they argue, "may affect not only our thoughts about our medium but also what we expect when we are dealing variously with messages or materials associated with that medium"

(p. 240). Such stereotypes might in turn influence users' behaviors in "positive" or "negative" directions, depending on the nature of the stereotype and the technology with which it is associated.

To more fully understand this process, attitudes towards television users must be assessed. That is, in order to understand how television users perceive of themselves (and with what consequences), it is necessary to explore the sources of such attributions -- the social cognitive perceptions of television usage. While Whetmore and Kielwasser (1983) assumed that such cognitions exist, they did not move on to document or more fully explore them.

Proposing a more formal theory of the self-concept, Kinch (1972a, p. 247) provides a different perspective. He reports:

> The actual responses of others to the individual will be important in determining how the individual will perceive himself; this perception will influence his self-conception which, in turn, will guide his behavior. Symbolically,
>
> $$A \longrightarrow P \longrightarrow S \longrightarrow B \quad [\longrightarrow = \text{"leads to"}]$$

In this formulation, "A" represents the actual responses of others toward an individual. "P" represents the individual's perceptions of how others respond to him or her. "S" refers to the individual's self-concept, which Kinch defines as "that organization of qualities that the individual attributes to himself" (p. 246). "B" refers to the individual's behavior, or "that activity of the individual relevant to the social situation" (p. 247). Also, according to Kinch, in actual social situations the process represented by the formula is more properly conceived of as circular (p. 248).

Agàin, the relevance of such a concept for mass communication research is clear. When a person says, for example, "I prefer watching TV to going to the movies," what responses are received or imagined? The idea of "film" implies more cultural acceptability in our society than does "television." That is, it is presumed that film viewing, or at least the "correct" viewing of the "correct" films, makes a more healthy contribution to the cultural and intellectual development of the individual. Such considerations are, still, rarely bestowed upon the activity of television usage. Whether or not these evaluations are "accurate" does not take away from the fact that such evaluations can determine the individual's self-perceptions in relation to these media and thus serve as behavioral guides. In terms of television usage, then, we need to ascertain elements of "the actual responses of others to the individual," or "A" in Kinch's formulation, to more fully understand the circular process as a whole.

In another article, Kinch (1972b) also elaborates upon the interaction of perceived responses and self-concepts. Based on a review of literature in the area, he proposes a series of hypotheses that identify conditions under which perceived responses are likely to affect self-concept. These hypotheses involve several variables, including frequency, importance, temporal proximity, and consistency. Each of these conditions is important to this study in a number of ways.

What is most significant at this point, though, is to recognize the fact that television researchers have failed to usefully develop or address such concerns. Consider, for example, Kinch's hypothesis regarding frequency:

> The more frequently the individual perceives others as responding toward him in a particular way, the more likely he is to align his self-concept with the perceived responses. (p. 263)

As television researchers, we cannot yet begin testing such a hypothesis in terms of our particular area of inquiry; we have, as yet, no systematic reports of the implicit assumptions persons hold with regard to television usage and users. That is, we cannot know if such assumptions serve to direct behaviors in the face of television usage; we cannot adequately know how and if the way television users perceive of themselves as television users affects that usage, since we do not yet have an adequate estimate of the social assumptions and responses that would most certainly inform these self-evaluations.

Hoffman (1981) identifies yet another set of factors that seem to be useful for developing a social cognition theory of television usage. He argues that social cognition is distinctly different from physical cognition and " . . . must operate under different rules" (p. 67). Hoffman says, for example, that social cognition is based "less on logic and more on probability, shared cultural belief systems, cultural stereotypes, and scripts." He goes on to note that these elements are often nonveridical "because they tend to override immediately available data." "For example, " he says, "when we use stereotypes we often overlook the idiosyncratic properties of a particular person" (p. 67).

Again, when applied to television usage, Hoffman's points suggest new directions for research and theory. That is, the shared cultural values regarding television usage, the stereotypes that arise from and support those values, and the script- and schema-related derivatives of such cognizing are worthy of research attention. Of particular importance is Hoffman's observation that social cognition is a unique and distinct cognitive activity. He argues that cognitions about self and others, especially when cast in terms of "social norms," are very different from cognitions about the "purely" physical world. When people think about other people, that thinking has the "power" to change social reality. Physical reality (as far as we now know) responds much less acutely to our prejudices, wishes, fears, and desires. Observations of "natural phenomena" are no doubt shaped by socially derived values, but those phenomena do not respond to such values. Physical phenomena remain fundamentally unchanged by value systems, regardless of whether or not we perceive this stability. Human beings (and, conceivably, other more socially aware animals), as they function within an environment rife with social cognizing, respond to themselves and to one another in ways that *can be* quite separate from "physical reality." My assumption that you are mad might move you to madness. The dynamic, of course, is more complex, but the central concept remains the same.

Commenting on social cognition and social behavior, Berndt (1981) has devised a model for the relation between the two, expanding upon a model developed by Ajzen and Fishbein to describe the relation between attitudes and behavior (pp. 186-187):

$$B \approx BI = (A_{beh})w_0 + SNB(Mc)w_1 + PNB(Mc)w_2$$

Where:

B = behavior

BI = behavioral intention, or intention to perform a behavior

A_{beh} = attitude toward performing the behavior

SNB = social normative beliefs, beliefs about the expectations of reference group members

Mc = motivation to comply with the expectations of reference group members, or with social normative beliefs

PNB = personal normative beliefs, or the person's beliefs about what he or she should do

$w_{0,1,2}$ = empirically-determined weights

It is again important to stress that the behavior (B) of interest here is television usage. Berndt's model, designed to predict intention to perform a behavior (BI) points to new avenues for exploring motivations and inhibitions associated with the intent to use and usage of television. At least, Berndt offers a more conceptually complex approach in comparison to what generally guides "uses and gratifications" research designs. But beyond that, and of interest here, Berndt's model points to other interesting phenomena.

Notably, Berndt reports that his model incorporates the notion that "... attitudes toward performing the behavior [are] assumed to be a function of the perceived consequences of the behavior for the individual multiplied by the evaluation of those consequences" (p. 186). In regard to television usage, this component of Berndt's model remains largely ignored.

Furthermore, Berndt concludes from a laboratory study that certain prosocial behaviors among children (e.g., the willingness to donate pennies) increase with age (Mussen & Eisenberg-Berg, in Berndt, 1981). He speculates on the reasons for such behavior:

> The increase might reflect changes in perceptions of the personal consequences of donating (e.g., changes in the value of pennies to children), changes in the child's understanding of social norms or motivation to comply with them (e.g., changes in responses to the experimenter's implicit demands), changes in children's personal norms or motivation to comply with them (e.g., changes in children's opinions about what they should do), or changes in the relative importance of these factors to the decision. (p. 187)

Extending these notions, consider the potential influences that may encourage children to or not to use television. The factors that determine such behaviors may be quite similar to those mentioned by Berndt. Certainly, children's perceptions of the social norms surrounding television usage are acquired and continue to evolve over the course of the life span. Likewise, children's estimates of the personal consequences of television usage are developmental phenomena. And of course, adult's estimations of personal consequences, social norms, and so on are fluid as well. But whether the focus is on children or adults, these factors need to be more carefully explored in order to understand not only the intentions and motivations related to television usage, but in order to understand <u>any</u> behavioral variables that are related to the use of this unique medium.

In every instance mentioned thus far, the need for more careful exploration of the many social cognition variables involved in television usage (or any mass media usage) is quite clear. Obviously, the domain of inquiry is so vast -- and so uncharted -- that the decision to pursue any explanation of such variables is a most difficult challenge. But new lines of inquiry are always frustrating, particularly because the broader, conceptually-based questions must first be formulated and debated before further, more concrete steps towards analysis can be taken. The primary goal here is to explore some of these questions.

Research Possibilities

In reflecting upon possible avenues for exploring the social cognitive perceptions of television more closely, a number of research alternatives come to mind. For example, tests can be constructed for analysis of the relationships between person perception and media usage. To this end, "guest lecturers" could deliver prepared presentations to different groups of subjects, varying the presentation only in terms of the media usage habits they attribute to themselves. Researchers could refine usage variables to include different media, media genres, perceptions of source credibility, and even specific media content or programming. In this way, the social values associated with various media, their content, and their use could be more fully understood.

At a methodological level, it might be possible to approach the study of social cognitive perceptions of media usage through more direct, "survey-type" designs. Such data would certainly be interesting (and some already

exist), but they would also be subject to serious problems regarding validity. Once again, there is, at times, a difference between what people say they feel and what they actually feel. It is possible, for example, that a woman might indicate that she would not respond negatively (in whatever context is at issue) to a person who indicates a preference for television rather than the newspaper for, let us say, entertainment as well as information. If that woman holds a socially-conditioned stereotype about such preferences, that stereotype might very well direct behavior, despite what she as a respondent says is true. As Bem (1970) points out, some stereotypic views can be "nonconscious," or at least not something upon which persons are apt to accurately report (pp. 89-99).

At any rate, even when such social cognitive perceptions have been documented, the difficult task will remain: determining if and how those perceptions influence the interactions and outcomes associated with mass media usage. Consider, for example, a seminal study conducted by Snyder and Uranowitz (1978), who sought to document the influence of a person prototype upon memory. Subjects were read a lengthy narrative on the life of "Betty K." One group was later told that Betty was a homosexual, while a second group learned that Betty was a heterosexual. A control group was told neither of these things. The subjects' beliefs about Betty's sexual orientation affected not only what they remembered about her, but also what errors they tended to make when attempting recall. In short, " . . . the subjects matched her [Betty] with a specific prototype, they recalled information that went with that prototype and forgot information that did not" (Watson, deBortali-Tregerthan, & Frank, 1984, p. 45). Can it be that

certain prototypes exist regarding media usage? The type of research conducted in regard to "Betty K." might be useful in further exploring this question.

In fact, there is a wide array of research in the area of person perception and social cognition that could fruitfully be adapted to analyses of media usage. For example, various researchers have attempted to document women's lower social status (e.g., Linsenmeier & Wortman, 1979; Basow, 1980; Rubin, 1981); these studies might be reworked in order to examine the "status" associated with various forms of media usage and related behaviors. Research on such seemingly unrelated issues as self-handicapping might also be useful for exploring some of the issues posed here. We know, for example, that "people who follow self-handicapping strategies exaggerate the influence of things that interfere with their performance" (Watson, deBortali-Tregerthan, & Frank, 1984, p. 88). In one study, for example, persons were given the choice of taking a drug that would either lower their intellectual abilities or one that would raise them. By choosing the handicapping drug, subjects would have an "excuse" for future failures (see Berglas & Jones, 1978). Do persons incorporate television usage into their lives as a sort of "handicapping" device? If so, is such behavior determined, at some level, by social cognitive attributions related to the "effects" of television usage? There are other implications of pursuing such research as well.

Of course, these questions do not exhaust the potentially relevant considerations that arise from the many studies of person perception and social cognition. Furthermore, the countless studies conducted by social

psychologists in the area of discrimination and prejudice could also be redesigned to study attributions made about media users. The research possibilities are endless, and still ignored.

Toward a Reciprocal Interaction Scheme for Understanding the Processes of Mass Communication Influences

In his classic work *Steps to an Ecology of Mind*, Gregory Bateson (1972) has written:

> In the natural history of the living human being, ontology and epistemology cannot be separated. His (commonly unconscious) beliefs about what sort of world it is will determine how he sees it and acts within it, and his ways of perceiving and acting will determine his beliefs about its nature. The living man is thus bound within a net of epistemological and ontological premises which -- regardless of ultimate truth or falsity -- become partially self-validating for him. (p. 314)

Obviously, we need to spend much more time and effort researching (as far as we can) the influences upon our expectations (about the mass media and ourselves as users of them) as they relate to the actual influences of media on our lives. We suggest that there is a constant interplay amongst use, belief, and affect in all of the varied situations we refer to as "mass communication." Perhaps, then, it is as likely that an effect (or influence) of television usage might lead to a belief about the medium as it is that a belief about the medium might lead to an effect.

To the extent that the dynamics of this epistemological-ontological reciprocity remain unexamined ("unconscious"), patterns of media usage could develop that might or might not be appropriate to or reflective of these media and their users. To state this matter even more strongly, perhaps our knowledge of media effects serves to create the very effects we seem to have discovered.

Of course, this observation might be an overstatement; it is certainly rather broad. Clearly, media and mediated information function as stimuli in the lives of consumers. But we might not fully understand the nature of such stimuli without reflection upon the social cognitive attributes that shape our responses to them. Watzlawick's comments seem particularly appropriate:

> Even if the soothsayer is a fake, his wrong predictions may very well become self-fulfilling prophecies, not because they correctly predict the future, but because <u>their having been made changes the future</u> In other words, as long as the other person believes in predictions, it does not really matter whether they are correct or not in an abstract sense, for they will affect that person's behavior just as powerfully and irreversibly as "real" prophecy. (1976, p. 229)

Laing (1971) has observed a similar phenomena in the diagnosis of schizophrenia:

> Such a definition may even be an "aetiological factor" in creating the "illness" one is purporting to cure. Social situations are <u>the</u> field for the self-fulfilling prophecy. A self-fulfilling diagnosis of the situation tends to induce the situation as defined. (p. 42)

Mass communication researchers might contribute to such diagnoses in their own ways, especially in the area of "negative" media influences. At the very least, this question is worth serious consideration. Individuals might see themselves as victims of their own prophecies as well. After all, we all know that watching too much television is bad for us . . . .

Conclusion

The central concern here has been on the singular and far-reaching observation that socialization about, interactions with, and influences of the mass media are interrelated in rather important and understudied ways. In light of our propensity to refer to television usage as a behavior, for example, we have not really done the obvious -- examine beliefs about that behavior, beliefs that must somehow affect that behavior. "The widest community in which the individual finds himself," wrote George Herbert Mead, "that which is everywhere, through and for everybody, is the thought world. He is a member of such a community, and he is what he is because he is a member" (1977, p. 234).

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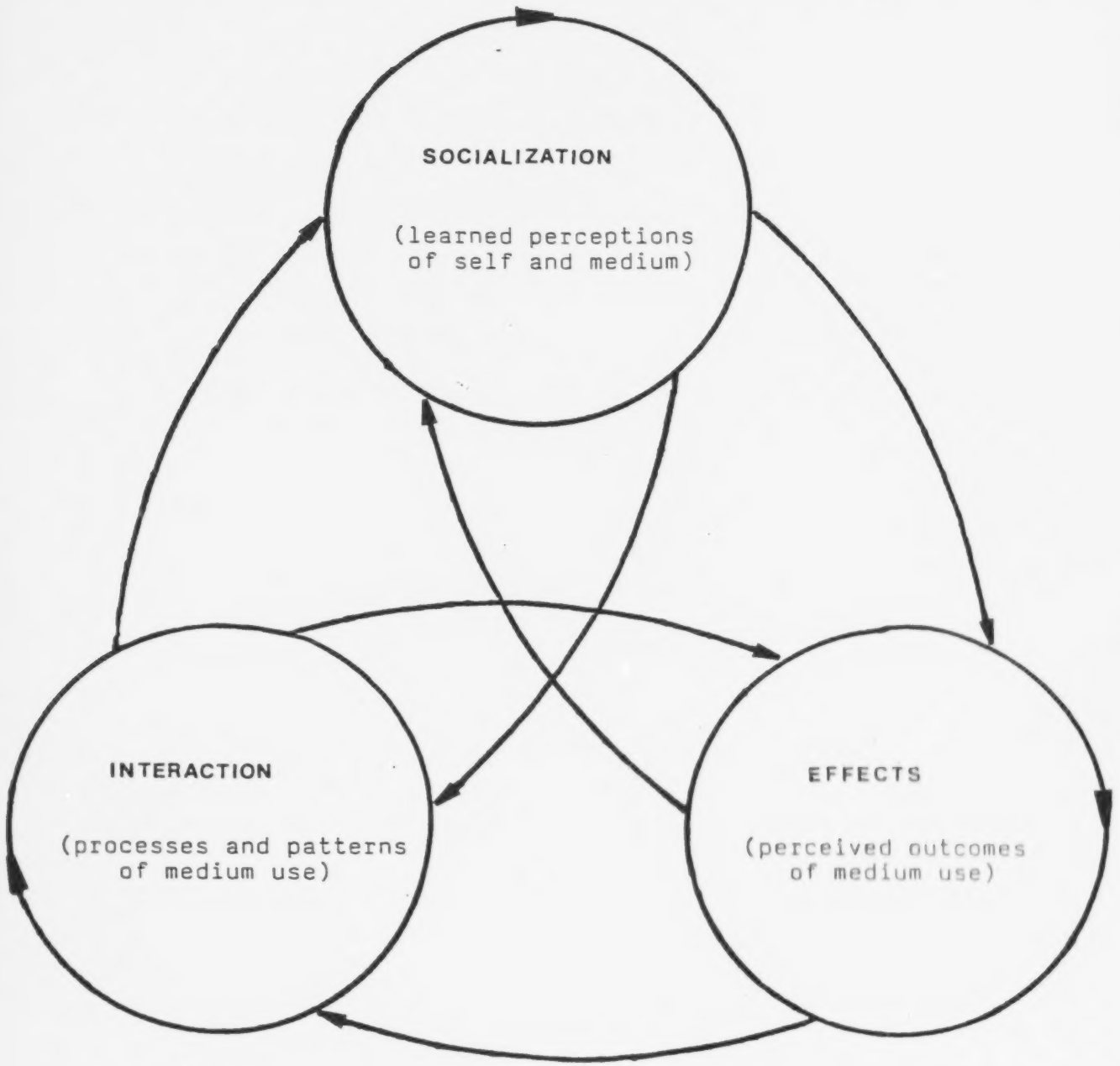
SOCIALIZATION
(learned perceptions of self and medium)
INTERACTION
(processes and patterns of medium use)
EFFECTS
(perceived outcomes of medium use)

Figure 1.

Figure Caption

Figure 1. Reciprocal interaction amongst socialization, usage, and effects in mass communication processes.